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Merkley Invites Struggling Families to Testify to the Senate on the State of the American Dream

New Chair of Economic Policy Subcommittee of the Banking Committee Seeks to Put Middle Class Families At Center Of Policy Debate

Washington, DC – Today, Oregon's Senator Jeff Merkley announced he will hold his first hearing as chair of the Subcommittee on Economic Policy on **Wednesday, June 5, at 2:30 PM in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 538**. The topic will be "the State of the American Dream – Economic Policy and the Future of the Middle Class." Seeking to include voices not normally heard in committee hearings and public policy debates, the witnesses on the panel will include Oregonians who have struggled through the recent recession and were featured in the documentary movie "American Winter."

"We have heard plenty from the rich and the powerful in the Senate, but not enough from working families struggling to get by in tough times," Merkley said. "Every time Congress talks about economic policy, they should be asking about the real effects of their choices on the American middle class and those families hoping to join it. This hearing, my first, will focus on what we can do to make the American dream real again."

"It used to be that if you worked hard, and played by the rules, you could get your own slice of the American dream. But for at least the last decade, that just hasn't been so, and the sequester and the last two years of artificial crises have made it even worse. This hearing will put a human face on our economic policies and explore what we can do to restore the American dream for working families."

Panel I will feature Ms. Diedre Melson; Mr. John Cox; and Ms. Pamela Thatcher, subjects of the documentary movie "American Winter," which debuted on HBO in March 2013. In "American Winter," Emmy®-winning filmmakers Joe and Harry Gantz (CBS' "The Defenders") profile eight struggling families who called into the 211info social services hotline in search of help. The film presents an intimate snapshot of the state of the nation's economy as it is playing out in the lives of many American families, and reveals the human consequences of rising economic insecurity, budget cuts to safety net programs, and the fracturing of the American dream.

Panel II will feature Dr. Atif Mian, Professor of Economics and Public Policy, Princeton University; Ms. Heather McGhee, Vice President for Policy, Demos; Mr. Nick Hanauer, Second Avenue Partners; and Mr. Steve Hill, Executive Director, Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development. They will testify on public policy options for restoring the American dream.